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ABSTRACT

An assessment of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program sought to determine the program's performance in: assisting low-income families to acquire knowledge, skills, and motivation; providing knowledge of public and private institutions and a positive impact on the family budget as well as on program aides; developing homemaking skills; and optimizing human resources contributing to the program. Through observations and interviews, data were collected in seven states at locations to include different geographic and urban areas and ethnic groups. The program has come into being with impressive speed and a minimum of false starts. Participant acceptance of the program is high and there are signs that it can achieve stated objectives. The use of indigenous aides has worked well. The target population is being reached but there ought to be increased concentration on people in greatest need. In addition, the program needs improvement of management techniques and interagency cooperation and adequate resources. (NL)

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PROGRAM EVALUATION

JANUARY to JULY 1969

EXPANDED FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FEDERAL EXTENSION SERVICE

AC008016

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November 1969

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents a summary of general conclusions and recommendations resulting from an evaluation of the initial phase of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. The assessment, conducted from January through July 1969, was intended to look at the program in depth at a selected sample of sites. Evaluation findings are intended to supplement statistical data being obtained by the Economic Research Service (ERS) for all program sites.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the evaluation effort were established through a review of CES State and Federal plans of work and materials. This information was amplified through discussions with Federal, State, and county Extension personnel.

The assessment sought to determine the program's performance in:

- Assisting low-income families to acquire knowledge, skills, and motivation which will improve the quality and adequacy of their diets.
- Providing knowledge of public and private institutions and programs which will aid the family.
- Providing a positive impact on the family budget.
- Assisting participants to develop a broader range of homemaking skills.
- Meeting the special needs of specific portions of the population.
- Having a positive impact on the life situations of Extension program aides.
- Carrying out internal operations of the program effectively.
- Optimizing human resources contributing to the program.

DATA COLLECTION

Sample

Data collection was carried out within seven States at study locations selected cooperatively by CES and ERS to include differing geographic areas, urbanizations, and ethnic backgrounds of potential program participants. All persons associated with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program--Extension agents, supervising aides, aides, and participating families--at each site were represented in the collected data. In addition, information was gathered from State Extension personnel, representatives of health and welfare organizations, economic opportunity and community groups, educational institutions, food assistance programs, housing agencies, businesses, churches, and legal and local government groups. More than 200 man-days were spent at the seven locations by members of the evaluation team, an average of nearly 30 man-days per site.

Techniques

The primary data-collection techniques employed were observations and interviews. These techniques were utilized in obtaining information from all types of personnel directly or indirectly associated with the program. Additional data on families contacted during the evaluation, as well as on other participating families, were obtained through a review of program records supplemented by discussions with aides.

The numbers of each personnel type involved in the data-collection effort at all seven sites are presented below:

State Extension Staffs Interviewed	7
Agents Interviewed	22
Assistants Interviewed	15
Aides Interviewed	187
Families:	
Records Obtained	2,189
Homemakers Interviewed	438
Other Agency Personnel Interviewed	59

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The evaluation objectives (cited on page 1) were examined in depth across initial program operation at the study locations. The findings are summarized below as they relate to overall strengths and weaknesses of the program rather than to the set of objectives.

The strengths of the program center around its ability to come rapidly into being with high acceptance. Its present difficulties center around the formidable task for any social program of demonstrating a real and lasting impact on family living even when some of the preconditions for having such an impact have been demonstrably achieved. Program weaknesses center around limited ability to assess progress, to correct deficiencies, to gauge and adapt to change, and to develop improved techniques for required growth.

The general findings relating to these issues are stated below. The remainder of this report is devoted to a discussion of each of these areas. Recommendations are made for program improvement where appropriate.

- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program has come into being with impressive speed and a minimum of false starts.
- Participant acceptance of the program is high.
- There are many signs that the program is in a position to achieve stated objectives, some signs that objectives are being achieved, and no signs that objectives cannot be achieved.
- The use of indigenous program aides has worked well and has great potential for the future.
- There is great variation among sites, with much of the variation in program and operation determined by the strength of the local supervising agent.
- The target population is being reached, but there is a need for improved techniques to concentrate on those in greatest need.
- The program needs selective improvement of management techniques.
- The program needs improvement in working effectively with other agencies.
- The future of the program is hampered by a lack of adequate development resources.

PROGRAM START

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program has come into being with impressive speed and a minimum of false starts.

At the completion of the evaluation, the national program was less than a year old. Yet, it had been conducting significant field operations for up to six months. The numbers of program personnel and participants grew rapidly. Naturally, startup was more rapid and precise in areas where Extension agents were already working with the low income. But a number of agents whose previous programs had been almost entirely with middle-class families launched effective programs with low-income families. There were, however, agents with lesser motivation and/or ability to cope with problems of working with the poor who did not move as rapidly toward an effective program. State personnel are faced with the problem of how best to identify and overcome program weaknesses related to the attitudes and abilities of Extension agents.

But despite some isolated instances of difficulty in getting substantive efforts underway, there seems to be no question of whether a program can be launched--it was. The five-year pilot project in Alabama and other similar activities were undoubted aids in sure-footed program initiation. Within the first year, a network was established across the country having high potential for continued operation and future growth. Renewed efforts to capitalize on this potential are encouraged.

PARTICIPANT ACCEPTANCE

Participant acceptance of the program is high.

No signs of significant active antagonism on the part of any segment of the target population were detected during the evaluation. In general, aides of the same ethnic background as the homemaker were more readily accepted than those of a differing ethnic background. There were some situations in which gaining acceptance was particularly difficult. Male heads of Spanish-speaking families often insisted that their wives, when alone, accept no visitors. Women in high-rise public housing developments tended to be very fearful of strangers of either sex. Despite such difficulties, the overall receptivity to the program was quite high. And the resistances were not directed to the program or its objectives. Rather, the resistance was mostly coincidental to established folkways, racial attitudes, and response to a violence-laden environment.

Participants supported the program strongly in interviews even when they were unable to relate any specific ways in which the program had helped them. There is no reasonable doubt that a large proportion of low-income homemakers are ready to accept instruction on foods and nutrition.

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

There are many signs that the program is in a position to achieve stated objectives, some signs that objectives are being achieved, and no signs that objectives cannot be achieved.

In sites where the program was initiated, aides were working with low-income homemakers. These homemakers were able to describe some of the basic objectives of the program. Many homemakers expressed a desire for aides to continue making visits. Aides were, in general, highly motivated toward their work. These and many other signs point to the program's readiness to achieve stated objectives.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to the question, "To what extent is the program meeting its objectives?" Reasons for this uncertainty are many, including:

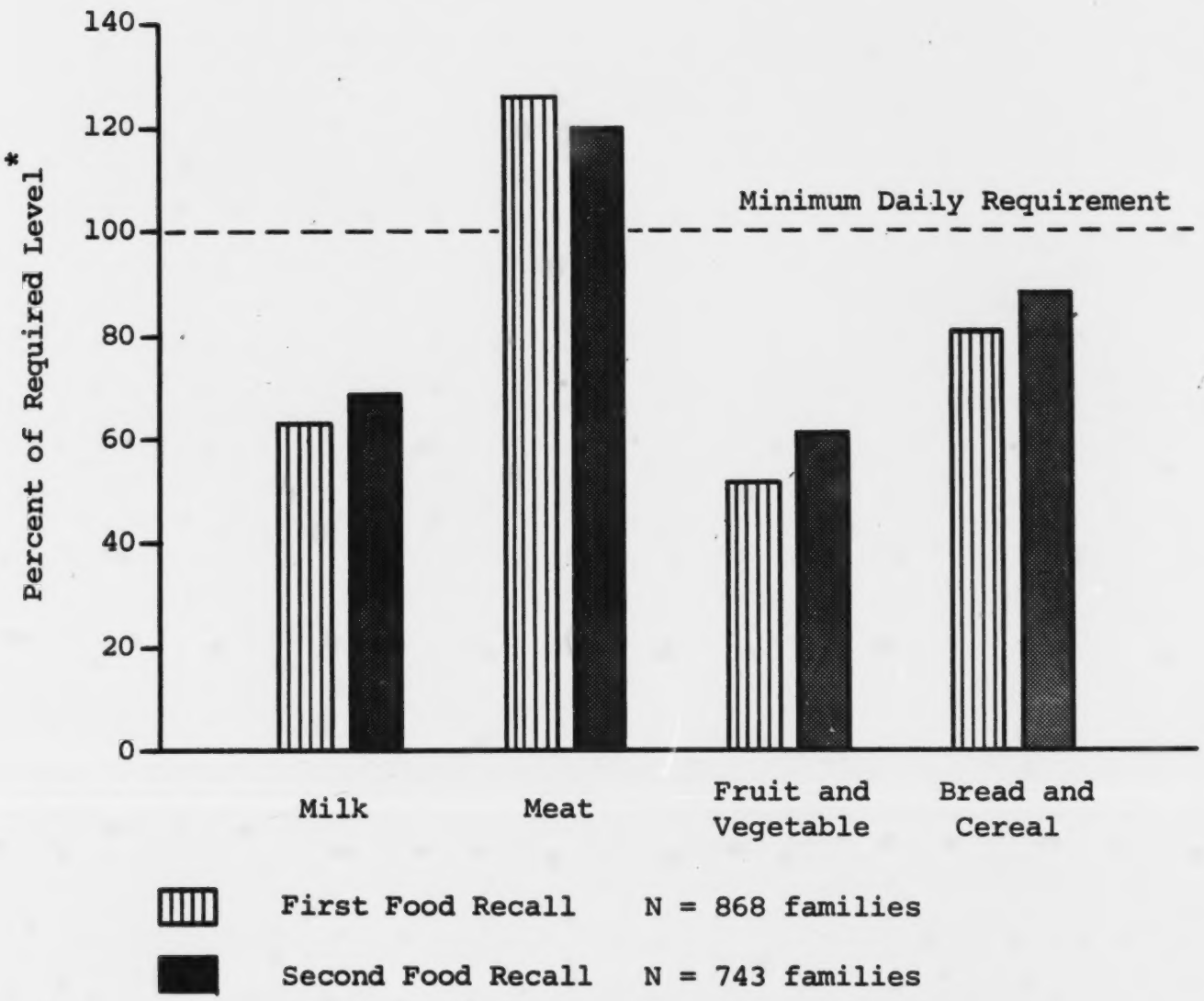
- The newness of the program.
- The sensitivities and complexities involved in assessing changes in patterns of family living.
- The relatively rudimentary state of technology for measuring the effectiveness of social programs.

It cannot be said at this point whether the program has had an impact on the nutrition of a significant number of low-income families, let alone assess magnitude of impact. Yet, not only are signs of program failure notably lacking, those indicators which are available consistently point toward a favorable program posture.

One example of such favorable conditions for program success is demonstrated by the food recall data presented in Figure 1. Analysis of initial food recalls collected at four of the seven study locations revealed homemaker dietary deficiency in three of the four food categories, i.e., the milk, fruits and vegetables, and bread and cereal groups; while servings in the meat group exceeded the minimum

daily requirement. A second food recall, administered about three months after the first, may indicate some early result of teaching in the right direction--toward increased use of breads and cereals and particularly of milk, fruits, and vegetables.

The utility of the Food Recall Procedure, however, is not being fully exploited either as a diagnostic tool to indicate how aides should work with individual homemakers and what specific emphases agents should place in continuing training programs or as an in-place measure of homemaker level of nutrition education. (Suggestions for improved administration of the Food Recall Procedure are discussed on page 12 under Aide Training. The utility of the Food Recall Procedure as an indication of program achievement is discussed on page 23.)



*Based on two daily servings in each of the milk and meat groups and four daily servings in the fruits/vegetables and bread/cereal groups.

Figure 1. Comparison of First and Second Food Recall Data for Selected Study Sites.

Certainly, if one can place any credence in homemaker self-reports, a good proportion of the participants have increased their awareness of food and nutrition issues. It is the extent to which such awareness has been carried through to performance which cannot yet be precisely specified.

USE OF INDIGENOUS AIDES

The use of indigenous program aides has worked well and has great potential for the future.

The value of aides from the target population as a means of extending the Extension agents' reach into special subpopulations was well demonstrated in pilot projects. The effectiveness with which CES could utilize such personnel on a national scale and the extent to which homemakers of varied ethnic and regional differences would respond--either as staff or as participants--were not known at the outset of the program.

That the low-income homemaker is willing to serve CES as an aide is attested to by the fact that almost all agents reported having had more qualified applicants than they had jobs. Aides who comprised the staff at the time of evaluation were, almost without exception, proud of the amount and relevance of learning they had accomplished in the areas of budgeting, food purchase, food preparation, and nutrition. They consistently reported that this learning had had a favorable impact on their own family life.

In some respects, aides demonstrated greater interest and enthusiasm than could have been expected under existing circumstances, such as:

- Varying pay scales based not on merit, but on such factors as level of formal education.
- Negligible increase in income over that received on public assistance and a considerable loss in fringe benefits.
- Delays or mix-ups in pay and reimbursement.

It is unrealistic to expect their earlier enthusiasm to continue if the States' administrative handling of aides is not improved.

Homemakers participating in the program, according to aides' logs and verbal reports, were pleased with the aides' performance. Their reaction was verified in visits to homes of participating families. With rare exceptions, homemakers were enthusiastic about the program--even when they were unable to say what it had done to help them or why

the aide visits should continue. Agents were also generally pleased with aide performance, expressing relatively few regrets and complaints.

Aide Characteristics

Guidelines concerning desirable aide characteristics, distributed early in the program by the Federal Extension Service (FES), seem to be appropriate. In those relatively few instances where aide performance was totally ineffective, it was most likely because one of the guidelines had been violated. Although there is no evidence of an immediate need for revised aide recruitment techniques and selection criteria, the following observations concerning specific aide characteristics may be helpful in future program planning.

Age. The aide under 25 or 30 years of age is likely to have special problems in being accepted by older homemakers. Aides over 50 years of age may find the physical aspects of the job difficult unless they are in exceptionally good physical condition.

Family status. Aides who have reared or are rearing children are generally more effective in relating to homemakers.

Education. A high-school diploma should not be required. If lacking, however, other evidence should be sought to ensure that applicants will be able to meet job performance requirements, including those for record keeping.

Physical location. In rural areas, it is especially important that aides be familiar with the area served, since many of the poorer families are in easy-to-miss locations. In urban areas, there is great temptation for an aide who lives in the immediate vicinity to spend considerable time stopping off at her home and making working visits primarily with family members or close personal friends. Particularly in these areas, home location of each aide relative to her target area should be considered by the agent.

Socio-economic background. Success as an aide is not dependent upon being poor--although prior experience with poverty, either personal or professional, is a definite asset to understanding the problems involved. However, if one places much importance on the role of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program as a vehicle for having a positive impact on the lives of aides from a low-income background, employment of middle-class aides should be minimized in the future. Particularly since, on the average, middle-class aides are somewhat less effective than aides from a low-income background.

Personality. Extremely shy or exceptionally aggressive aides can pose special problems and the avoidance of either extreme is advisable. But, faced with selection from these two extremes, the better risk is the shy applicant in that she will gain increasing confidence through training sessions, on-the-job exposure, and performance. The more aggressive aides do not easily give up their tendency to dominate homemakers and acquire the necessary skill in listening to them.

Access to an automobile. Access to an automobile seems to be essential for most rural aides, only infrequently and selectively so for aides in urban areas.

In the majority of cases where aide performance, though effective, did not reach full potential, the primary reasons involved training, materials and supplies, and workload and time allocation--including family selection and termination. Each of these areas is treated separately below.

Aide Training

Aide training at the seven sites varied extensively in content, thoroughness, and effectiveness. Length of initial training ranged from two days to three weeks. There is clear evidence that aides given more initial training reflected a better understanding of program objectives and made fewer false starts in getting their operations underway.

Continuing training sessions were generally scheduled weekly. There were many instances of effective training in this context, but aide comments and observations made during the evaluation indicated that the sessions frequently lacked substance. Few continuing training programs were directed toward specific training goals related either to the aides' personal lives or to long-range program operations.

Emphasis should be placed on teaching aides how to prepare simple, low-cost, and quick recipes, taking ethnic preferences into consideration. Learning to prepare complicated or expensive dishes is inappropriate; homemakers are sometimes frightened away by complicated recipes and can hardly afford them. Those states where pilot programs had been conducted were in the best position to teach the essentials of preparing economical dishes, since they already had a rather extensive inventory of low-cost recipes.

Aides should also be better instructed in how to make do with what is available in the homemakers' inventories of ingredients. In at least one State, aides were "dropping" families from the program because they consistently did not have the ingredients for making the selected recipe. These were families who really needed the help.

In addition, better instruction is needed in the administration and application of the Food Recall Procedure. Aides should be provided with a simple do/don't list for collecting food recall information. Supervisory personnel could work with experienced aides in tallying recalls until the aides are capable of translating food recall information into: (1) accurate and reportable data, and (2) a family/homemaker dietary deficiency/excess profile for use in identifying goals for a specific family and assessing progress.

Emphasis should also be given to instruction of the aides in the use of the Food and Nutrition Education Program Family Record and other local reports as a source of information about specific needs of individual families. Through such use, the records become a diagnostic tool through which the aide, working with the supervising agent, can identify appropriate avenues for dietary improvement and increased use of family resources. On a program basis, the collected set of family information and the Food and Nutrition Education Program Unit Report can be used by the agent as an indication of educational needs of the aides for homemaker instruction, as well as an indicator of program achievement.

Needs for improved program coordination with other agencies are discussed under Inter-Agency Activity (page 25). There is, however, a need for improved aide training and reference material regarding other agency services, including the Department of Agriculture food assistance programs. Instructional and reference materials must provide key information and structure it for aide use. Training sessions should provide comprehensive information and instruction which would:

- Ensure that aides are knowledgeable concerning the types of services available in the community and conditions for receiving such services.
- Permit aides to assess the specific needs of families which can be met by other services.
- Provide a strategy for effectively bringing these other community resources to bear on family needs.

Given such a context, aides will be in a better position to expend their efforts on nutrition education of homemakers.

Materials and Supplies

Aides used a great variety of items in their visits with homemakers, e.g., United States Department of Agriculture food pamphlets, State-prepared booklets and flyers, locally prepared information sheets and recipes, condiments and utensils for use in home demonstrations,

and toys to occupy children. The flexibility afforded by a multiplicity of materials is unquestionably desirable. However, an assessment should be made of the relative utility of all materials and supplies used by aides and additional or different items identified that would best serve the aide on initial and follow-up visits, with the objective of providing a basic set of materials for all aides. Materials in the package should be marked with a symbol uniquely identifying them as program items.

As mentioned earlier, new or revised materials which may prove useful include:

- A simple do/don't list to guide aides in the collection of food recall data.
- A revised food category sheet that would permit experienced aides to categorize and tally food recall information.
- Materials to explain the services of other agencies to homemakers, particularly food assistance programs.

Some additional areas of material development needs are discussed below.

Evaluation data indicated that a particularly acute weakness is the inappropriateness of printed material distributed to homemakers. In addition to the obvious problem, there was a tendency for aides to spend more time with homemakers who could understand and use the literature, and hence, with whom it was easier to work. Some aides were creative in this area, e.g., aides spent their own time converting recipes into simple pictures for homemakers who could not read or write. The need for literature suited to the aides' and homemakers' ability should not be overlooked in the future allocation of resources.

Most of the homemakers in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program are faced with stringent problems in the allocation of their limited financial resources. Further, many of them are not facile with numbers. The lack of instructional materials which aides could use in teaching improved allocation of resources hampered them in responding to the complex of problems involved in assisting homemakers toward improved nutritional levels for family members. A series of charts, slide rules, or conversion tables which homemakers could use to determine such factors as usable food quantities per gross weight or nutrition value per money unit would be helpful. Further attention should also be given to the total area of money-management training for aides as an educational vehicle with their homemakers.

Workload and Time Allocation

The guideline provided for initiating the program suggested that an aide might work with as many as 35 families during the first six months, then build up to working with about 100 homemakers over the first year of operation. In some locations, this guideline was mildly to grossly misconstrued.

The best estimate from interview and log data is that, during the time of evaluation, full-time aides (or full-time equivalent aides) were working effectively with an average of 35 families at one time. In establishing individual aide family load, however, some attention must be given to adjustment in relation to amount of travel and type of family; e.g., older persons take longer, requiring more time to chat.

In general, full-time aides felt they could make up to six contact visits a day; they could hold an average of two working visits per day depending on the type and time of activity. That is, when food preparation was built around a mealtime, scheduling more than one such visit a day was difficult. During this initial period, aides tried to make one food preparation visit plus one contact or discussion visit per day, the latter usually requiring not more than 45 minutes. Aides generally reported that they could not prepare for and conduct more than two or three group meetings a week, and some reported not being able to handle more than one group meeting weekly.

The most successful route followed in the scheduling of group sessions was that of leading up to the sessions after working with individuals in their own homes. At least two factors are relevant here: (1) even the moderately hard-to-reach poor do not readily congregate with strangers, (2) individual needs can be best ascertained when working with one homemaker at a time. Attempts to start with group meetings and progress to individual visits were not usually successful with the target audience.

During the first six months, aides spent an inordinate amount of time in preparing logs, family records, and other written reports. It should be noted that agents did not encourage overtime, but aides could not reconcile the requirements to work with "X" number of families and keep "Y" types of records. Attempts should be made in the direction of simplification and reduction of record keeping to that which is directly applicable to the aides' job and to effective program operation.

Career Opportunities for Aides

The problem of providing career opportunities for aides from the target population is recognized as being general and difficult. In some respects, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program is faced with a less severe problem than other programs in that the distribution of age, sex, and family status tends to preclude, for many, any career motivations other than being a good aide. However, there are still many aides for whom career opportunities would be appropriate--but for whom opportunities are largely lacking.

There are several ways in which improved career opportunities could be provided for aides. One approach would be the development of aide specialties such as assigning some the responsibility for special record-keeping functions for the aide group, in addition to regular aide functions. Although the main thrust in improved use of resources for administrative work should be in the direction of simplified record keeping, the extent of human resources being diverted to these activities could be alleviated by assigning certain record-keeping functions to aides who show skill and interest in preparing detailed reports. Such an assignment could be handled as a progression within the aide group.

The progression from aide to supervisory aide also represents a possible approach to providing career opportunities. This progression is currently a second rung on the career ladder in some locations. But other opportunities for exceptional workers should be creatively sought. If, for example, agent assistance positions were created, some of the administrative, aide selection, training, coordination with other agencies, and day-to-day supervisory responsibilities could be undertaken by the more talented and experienced assistants or aides.

THE SUPERVISING AGENT

There is great variation among sites, with much of the variation in program and operation determined by the strength of the local supervising agent.

Many factors make for differences in the program from one location to another. Some of these differences are desirable--making for optimum response to local variations in attitude, nature of poverty, geography, program resources, and the nature of other available services. There is also a great deal of variation in program effectiveness, however, which can be attributed to performance of the local agent.

Supervising Agent Characteristics

Based on all available evidence, agent characteristics related to the following areas are judged to be most importantly associated with program success.

Working with the hard-to-reach poor. Prior experience in working with low-income families or strong professional commitment combined with a belief that work with the hard-to-reach poor is an appropriate, and increasingly important, part of the CES mission is highly related to program success. Such belief is, of course, quite consistent with the increasing involvement of CES in such programs over the past ten years. The commitment of a number of Extension agents to working with low-income families is further attested to by their initiation of voluntary programs and proposals for funded programs prior to the advent of the national program.

Program acceptance. Most agents seemed to view the program as an appropriate, and in many instances, the most appropriate part of their job. They did, however, have full-time jobs and more before the program came along. Though all Extension agents interviewed during the evaluation evidenced high enthusiasm for the assignment, they confessed that the amount of time involved was far more than they had anticipated. The tendencies were to either work longer hours or to skip program items, neither of which is a satisfactory long-range solution. Rearrangement of priorities, curtailing some activities and reassigning others, is the only answer.

Learning from the target population. Some agents were not aware of the need to learn from, as well as provide a service to, the target population. On the opposite side of the coin were aides who did not feel it was their place to correct an agent, even though they were convinced that she was inaccurately representing the target population. Most agents have emphasized active participation by aides in training and have invited questions and critical comments. For effective program operation, agents must increase their own question-asking behavior.

Concentration on focal objectives. Also related to program success is concentration by the agent on the focal objectives of the program--not on aides or homemakers acquiring middle-class modes of speech, dress, or other peripheral behavior. It is not meant to be implied that it is undesirable for aides to become familiar with middle-class modes and values. Nor is it to say that acquisition of middle-class skills and techniques cannot be useful in developing career potential for the aide. Rather, it is simply to say that the stronger programs observed during evaluation were those in which the agent was accepting of the hard-to-reach poor as they are and in which the educational emphasis was primarily on the food and nutrition needs of low-income families. When agents made such an interpretation of program objectives, aides' behaviors received attention only insofar as they impacted on their ability to perform effectively.

Direct interaction with aides. The agent's role should be one of technical supervisor, administrator, coordinator with other agencies, and counselor to her staff regarding client activities and problems. Agents have generally accepted the role and perform most of it admirably. An increasing number have placed aide growth in appropriate perspective. To the extent agents are successful in effecting positive changes in aide performance, they must repeat the recruitment, training, and development efforts for other aides. They have, therefore, anticipated the added role of permanent recruitment and training director.

Target selection. In general, the selection of target areas was effective. Most agents chose one, two, or three sites for concentration of initial efforts, planning to expand as they and the aides gained experience.

Techniques which have been applied included:

- Use of committees composed of representatives of community organizations.
- General experience in or knowledge about the community, gained through other Extension activities.

- Use of census and/or Office of Economic Opportunity data.

- Personal tours of potential areas and discussion with selected residents and local community leaders.

Factors considered in priority ordering of local targets within selected areas were:

- Need, in terms of percentage of low-income families.

- Age levels and size of families.

- Dispersion of families.

- CES accessibility to the location.

- Interest of the people or community groups in the program.

Problems expected to be encountered in expansion or transfer of the program to new counties are: (1) a greater dispersion of the poor, making the concentration of an aide's effort in a single focal location less practical, and (2) a less well-established structure within which to find prospective aides. Side effects here may be an added requirement for private transportation, and greater difficulty in making initial contacts since aides may be less familiar with the area and the people. Planning efforts should take these factors into account.

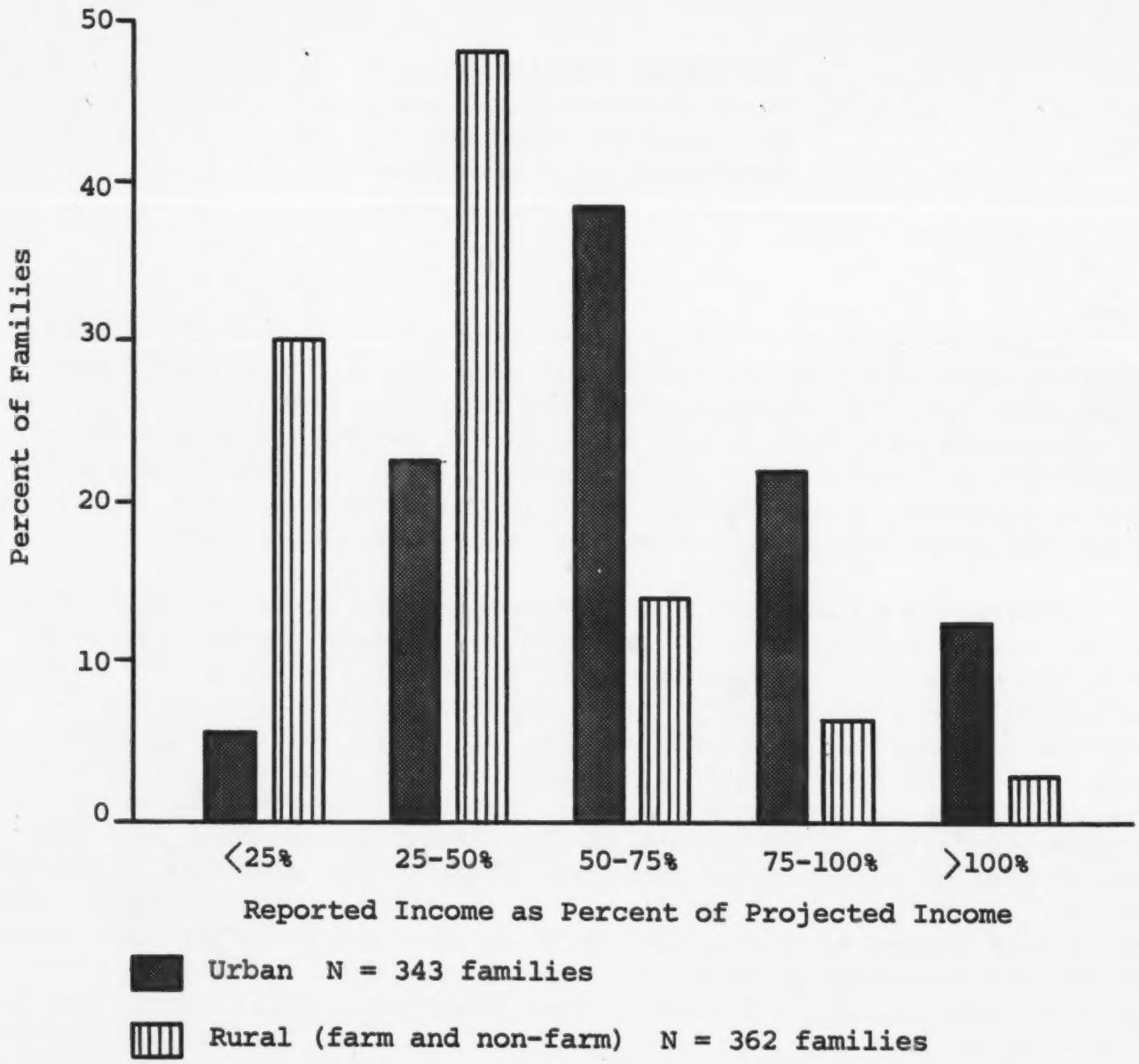
REACHING THE TARGET POPULATION

The target population is being reached, but there is a need for improved techniques to concentrate on those in greatest need.

Given the program's limited resources, it is essential that efforts be applied to families with the greatest need. The hard-to-reach poor have been designated as the program's target audience. It is understood that such an audience may not readily respond to participation and may be slow to put into practice the nutrition information imparted. Yet, the hard-to-reach poor represent the population where the greatest program impact is needed and must be made.

Observations made during the evaluation and an examination of projected income requirements as compared to reported income indicated that there has been reasonable concentration on the poor. For participating families for whom income data were available, nearly 79 percent had incomes 75 percent or less of the projected requirement based on the cost of food in the Basic Low-Cost Food Plan; nearly 93 percent of the participants had less than the requirement. As indicated in Figure 2, 66 percent of the participating urban families and 91 percent of the rural families had an income that was 75 percent or less of the projected requirement. It must be noted, however, that there were biases in the reporting of income, e.g., during home visits it was observed that income for higher-income families was less frequently reported than for lower-income families. Still, there can be little doubt that the program is generally serving the "right" people. What is lacking are guidelines for ensuring that the target population served continues to be appropriate and, further, that inappropriate families are not included in the program.

Two techniques of participant selection dominated the program. In some locations, aides were instructed to work so many blocks and to introduce the program to all homemakers. The philosophy behind this approach is, "We don't want to embarrass the poor, so include all." In other areas, aides were instructed to contact only those homemakers they could determine to be poor. Aides, understandably, had difficulty in defining just who they were. The most common guideline was "less than a $3,000 income for a family of four." Aides could not easily extrapolate from that guideline, for example, when income was seasonal or variable or where income was over $3,000 but family size was more or less than four.



Projected income based on formula presented by M. Orshansky (Social Security Bulletin, January 1965) using Low-Cost Food Plan data for March 1969 (United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, Food Economics Review, June 1969). Farm adjustment set at 30% (United States Department of Agriculture, Consumer Expenditure Report No. 35, 1966).

Figure 2. Ratio of Reported Income to Projected Income Requirement for Urban and Rural Families.

Once an aide had selected a family, she had trouble terminating the relationship if she later recognized that the homemaker did not fit the program. Agents rarely taught aides techniques of graceful termination of a participant. The problem was compounded by the emphasis on "numbers enrolled."

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The program needs selective improvement of management techniques.

Evaluation results suggested that program administration by supervising agents was generally not bad, and better than could have been anticipated in instances where agents had little prior administrative experience. A substantial number, though still a minority, began with an unrealistic expectation level for the resources available. In areas where the program is currently too dispersed with respect to geography, ethnic diversity, and rural-urban mix, opportunities should be taken to pull back on program activities where impact will not be too great. Agents in areas where programs are to be added need assistance from the State in keeping initial plans compatible with needs for manageability.

Based on observations of program operations during the period of evaluation, the following areas are regarded as in critical need of attention:

- Status monitoring.
- Adaptively setting objectives.
- Definition of performance requirements.

Status Monitoring

Local programs have little guidance on how to conduct self-evaluation and no systematically use-tested procedures. There are a number of purposes which could be served by local assessment. First of all, personnel at each site would have a useful tool in evolving an increasingly effective program, a tool that would also help in identifying and adapting to changing needs and conditions. They would have an answer to their frequently posed question, "Where do we go from here?"

Secondly, State personnel would have an improved basis for coordinating and allocating resources to local program activities. All States have sought feedback from operating sites, through direct contacts, questionnaires, and anecdotal or special reports. The techniques varied widely, but generally sought information on problem areas,

needs for additional training, and needs for materials. The data obtained have been used by States as a basis for periodic in-service training sessions and conferences, and for programming site visits by State and Federal Extension personnel. Activities of this type could not only be increased but would also be more beneficial if evaluation procedures were adequate and standardized.

An additional benefit from assessment procedures would be to provide a potential resource of evaluative data for the Federal government. Generation of such data through direct Federal effort would be difficult, perhaps impossible, and expensive.

One technique already developed and in use which has potential for local program status monitoring is the Food Recall Procedure. Though the status monitoring potential of the food recall has been generally overlooked by program personnel, it can, if properly applied, be used as a diagnostic tool, as well as to determine progress toward an adequate diet. An additional utility of the procedure would be in the direction of providing a rationale for agents and aides to use in determining when to terminate a homemaker from the program because she has received maximum possible benefit. A homemaker's repeated report of a sufficient number of daily servings of a variety of meat, milk, fruits and vegetables, and bread and cereals may suggest that discontinuing visits is in order.

Additional data already exist which could serve as status monitoring devices. ERS findings obtained from local summary reports, results of the recently completed evaluation, and program documentation, control, and evaluation procedures in use in some locations represent some of these available sources for evaluative information, as well as demonstration of appropriate techniques.

Adaptively Setting Objectives

Program operation at the local level would benefit by a more detailed specification of what knowledges and practices are to be imparted to the homemaker by the aide. Although much assistance can be provided through a more detailed overall program definition, there remains the need to tailor program objectives to local conditions, to specific needs of sub-populations, and to the level and type of homemaker need and acceptance.

Improved status monitoring will contribute information on which the refinement and modification of objectives can be made and the appropriate redirection of resources established. Through such feedback mechanisms, local programs will improve by responding to the effects of their own past performance.

Definition of Performance Requirements

Initiation of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program superimposed the program planning, operation, and supervision of aides upon an existing network of professional personnel already fully engrossed in other types of activities. The program was designed for lowest cost and maximum effect and assigned implementation of program functions to relatively low-cost aide personnel.

As with all other operations, including those conducted by Extension, there is a need--compatible with the setting of program objectives--for delineation of job responsibilities and performance requirements. Observation of program operations during the initial phase of operation indicated that where clear channels of responsibility, authority, and requirements were defined, program operation was not only smoother but produced greater results.

The nature of the CES structure allows for many interpretations of job responsibility allocation and requirements. Yet, in order for each person associated with the program to perform effectively, efficiently, and to full potential, there is a need for not only the delineation but the full comprehension of job responsibilities and requirements within each established CES framework.

INTER-AGENCY ACTIVITY

The program needs improvement in working effectively with other agencies.

Most of the agencies working with low-income families in areas served by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, when contacted by members of the evaluation team, responded with moderate approval of the program. There were also at least mild indications by other agency personnel that they did not understand the program well or consider it to be of much importance to their own activities.

There have been, and are, efforts at all levels to achieve cooperation among agencies. Almost all States formed advisory committees with other agencies at the beginning of the program, or at least offered extensive briefings for other agency personnel.

Most Extension agents invited some representatives of other agencies to explain the nature of their services at initial aide training sessions. This activity did not provide adequate information on which the aide could operate knowledgeably or effectively concerning other relevant agency services. There were isolated instances where agents and aides effectively, though sometimes abrasively, brought legitimate needs of their families to the attention of appropriate social service agencies. But by far the most typical mode of operation was for the aide simply to tell homemakers about available services either from her own experience or from reference to a list of locally available services which the Extension agent had supplied.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, like the rest of the community services, appears to be operating largely independently, usually parallel, sometimes competitively, and occasionally at cross purposes with other elements. The following recommendations should help to increase the capabilities of the program to bring multiple resources to bear on family problems.

> Maintain essentially the current approach in areas where the Donated Food Program operates, but increase aides' ability in transitioning from commodity foods as a central focus in initial visits with the homemakers to later focus on more general skills for improving the family's nutritional well-being.

- Provide States, agents, and aides with proven techniques for training low-income families on how to use the services of the Food Stamp Program, where appropriate. Current materials and techniques are apparently inadequate to assist aides in effectively increasing acceptance of or benefits from the Food Stamp Program.

- Maintain essentially the current approach to aide orientation to community service agencies and to their referral of families to such agencies, but increase emphasis on direct contact with other agencies both for orientation and for assistance to program families.

- Generate, at each operating site, a central source of "other agency" expertise. This individual or group may then coordinate the orientation visits of new aides, provide training and job materials relating to other agencies, and serve as advisor and troubleshooter on difficult coordination problems. In some cases, especially where the program is small, the agent may want to retain these functions. But, here is one area where aide skills can be developed, thereby providing wider internal career opportunities.

DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The future of the program is hampered by lack of adequate development resources.

Evaluation results clearly suggest that the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program is off to an impressive and good start, with high potential for future growth and improvement. But, if that potential is to be realized rather than stagnation or stultification setting in, adequate resources must be applied to the needs identified in earlier portions of this report. Critical needs have been discussed under the areas of: more effective management techniques, improved methods of adaptively setting objectives, better definition of performance requirements for all levels of personnel, career opportunities for aides, more training content and techniques, and materials more suited to target homemaker and aide abilities and needs.

CES personnel at all levels have been and remain aware of a need for continued development of products to support growth and improve effectiveness. Herculean efforts by many devoted people have gone into the development of existing materials and techniques, and there are plans in a number of places to strengthen developmental resources. But, it is still judged that resources are inadequate for the developmental needs of the future.

In the establishment of more powerful development resources, the following are presented as intrinsic considerations.

Concentration of Resources

It is essential that developmental resources be concentrated and expended in ways that will best nurture development. The allocation of resources should be adequate for appropriate technical specialists to accomplish developmental efforts in a definitive and professional manner. Resources should not be so split as to preclude effective production nor should they be expended in a redundant fashion. To repeat all, or any, of the required developments in 50 States and several Territories makes about as much sense as it would to have mounted 50 independent programs for landing a man on the moon. To avoid such duplication of effort and to foster the sharing of developmental results, some central knowledge/coordination of activities is a prerequisite.

Of course, products should be amenable to local modification and both Federal and State/Territorial levels should have an appropriate role in determining developmental policy and objectives. Within this framework, there are many workable Federal/State arrangements that could be made to concentrate resources in such a way that the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program will receive adequate developmental support in the future.

Flexibility of Structure

In considering the establishment of a functional structure for carrying out developmental efforts, the central issue is not that of deciding who will take on the responsibility for each unique development. The basic issue is that the problems or projects are defined, that adequate resources are allocated, and that responsibilities for accomplishment are unambiguously assigned.

Once project requirements and responsibilities are established at some upper program level, it is desirable that available talents are applied in a flexible manner fitted to project requirements. A most critical point of emphasis here is that talent be drawn from all available levels--from the lowest to highest levels across the program--as appropriate to obtaining adequate information and skills with which to accomplish the developmental effort.

Separation from Operations

The burden of responsibility for operations has repeatedly been found to be the nemesis of effective development, i.e., operations is a formidable and usually victorious rival over development. In terms of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, placing the burden of responsibility for the development of techniques, materials, etc., on those bearing the prime responsibility for carrying out effective operations is to invite the delayed accomplishment or non-accomplishment of developmental activities. Such an approach to development responsibility is an approach to program stagnation and expiration.

Supervisory agents and aides, and program aides have much to contribute to developmental efforts, but placing the prime responsibility for developmental accomplishments at these levels will impede program operations and result in unavoidable slippages in development schedules. However, CES has available technical specialists who have the requisite capabilities and interest in being responsible for development. The astute coupling of these specialist capabilities with the special knowledges and skills that agents and aides possess--and particularly their information on program operation and needs--will result in imaginative

and fruitful product developments necessary for continued effective program operation.

Differentiation from Research and Evaluation

Although they do and should interact, development must be clearly differentiated from research and evaluation. These disciplines are supportive one to another, yet, there should be no confusion as to the role each plays. The primary objective of research is to provide knowledge. Evaluation supports program decision making. And development provides useful products.

Applied research and program evaluation can contribute to the establishment of developmental objectives and to the effective design of materials, techniques, and procedures. Product developments can provide grist to the research and evaluation mills. Perhaps the greatest commonality to be found within these disciplines is that developmental testing involves many of the same concepts and techniques as are applied in research and program evaluation.

A prerequisite in the allocation of development resources lies in the understanding of differences between the disciplines. Achieving the appropriate separation of functions is a pivotal point in the continued growth of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program.

One of the major findings of civilization in this century has been that institutions which flourish are those which have adequately invested in developing organized response to growth and to change. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program can be no exception to this finding. The program has demonstrated an impressive initial phase of activity in response to a major need facing the Nation. If it is to move out from this phase and flourish as a continuing responsive social program, an adequate investment in its future must be made now through appropriate developmental activity.

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